Pakistan, Somalia abolish visas for diplomats

• President Zardari meets Somali Interior Minister Ali Yousuf, reaffirming Islamabad's commitment to stronger bilateral ties • Both sides discuss cooperation in law enforcement, extradition and criminal justice

By Bakhtawar Mian

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Somalia on Saturday signed an agreement abolishing visa requirements for diplomatic passports holders of both countries.

The agreement was signed at the Presidency by Hamza Adan Haadoow, Permanent Secretary of Somalia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and Dawood Muhammad Baraech, Special Secretary at Pakistan's Ministry of Interior and Narcotics Control.

President Asif Ali Zardari witnessed the signing ceremony and later met Somalia's Interior Minister Ali Yousuf, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to strengthening bilateral engagement. President Zardari said Africa was an important part of the world's geopolitical landscape and that Pakistan sought to enhance its ties with African states, including Somalia.

He added that Pakistan valued its engagement with Somalia and supported closer collaboration in areas of shared interest. The president was informed that the visit by the Somali interior minister marked the first official bilateral visit from Somalia to Pakistan in 35 years.

Emphasising Pakistan's commitment to regional and international efforts against transnational crime and narcotics trafficking, the president said broader geopolitical developments and opportunities for bilateral cooperation were also discussed during the meeting.

The Somali interior minister thanked the government of Pakistan, especially the Ministry of Interior, for the warm hospitality extended to him and his delegation. He said he was visiting Pakistan on the invitation of his Pakistani counterpart and conveyed his appreciation to the president and the people of Pakistan.

Mr Ali Yousuf also handed over a letter from the president of Somalia to President Zardari, conveying greetings and good wishes and reaffirming Somalia's desire to further deepen bilateral ties.

He described Pakistan as a reliable partner and brotherly country since Somalia's independence, recalling the sacrifices of Pakistani peacekeepers during UN missions in Somalia in the 1990s, where Pakistani personnel laid down their lives while serving under the United Nations flag.

During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on enhancing cooperation in law enforcement and criminal justice. Discussions included the feasibility of negotiating a bilateral extradition treaty and the legal frameworks governing extradition in both countries.

The possibility of initiating talks on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters and the transfer of sentenced persons was also explored. The two sides further discussed cooperation in counter-narcotics efforts, including collaboration against drug trafficking and organised crime, information and intelligence sharing, as well as capacity building and training.

President Zardari was informed that Pakistan had offered assistance through the National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra), in advanced identity management, civil registration and secure documentation systems, as well as training for the Somali police force.

Federal Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control Mohsin Raza Naqvi and Minister of State for Interior and Narcotics Control Talal Chaudhry were also present at the meeting. Other members of the Somali delegation included Sheikhnur Mohamed Hassan, Ambassador of Somalia to Pakistan, and Osman Abdullahi, Deputy Police Chief.

PRESIDENT Asif Ali Zardari, Somali Interior Minister Ali Yousuf, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and State Minister for Interior Talal Chaudhry witness the signing of an agreement at the Aiwan-i-Sadr on Saturday.—PPI

Joined Gaza peace board with cabinet approval: PM

Continued from Page 1

international attention and reiterated Pakistan's long-standing position in support of Palestinian rights.

The premier also highlighted his meeting with IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva, describing it as positive.

He did not share details of the discussion but said Pakistan would continue to engage constructively with international financial institutions as it works to stabilise its economy.

Commenting on regional security, PM Shehbaz said he had thanked Mr Trump for what he described as his role in "saving millions of lives in South Asia by ending the India-Pakistan war", without elaborating further.

Meanwhile, the prime minister's aide, Rana Sanaullah, also told *Geo News* that the federal cabinet had endorsed the decision to join the Board of Peace.

"There was much discussion on this and the cabinet endorsed it. After the cabinet's endorsement, the prime minister accepted this [invitation]," he said.

"The development happened in the past week to 10 days. Based on this, the government signed after consultations with the cabinet. I know this, I was in that consultation," he said.

The decision to join the board was criticised, with politicians and analysts saying that the decision was "unwise" and Pakistan had "jumped the gun".

In response, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry had defended the move in the National Assembly, saying the country joined the body meant to oversee Gaza's rebuilding in the interest of the Palestinian people.

The issue was also raised during a joint sitting of Parliament on Friday, with JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman claiming the decision was taken because of the "fear of Trump".

The government had again defended the move, with Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal saying that Pakistan being at the "centre stage" along with its brother Muslim countries to contribute towards peace in Gaza and Palestine was a "diplomatic win".

Balochistan revives 164 BHUs

QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti announced on Sunday the provincial government has revived 164 Basic Health Units in the province and successfully completed the recruitment of nearly 3,000 doctors on a contract basis to serve in these units.

He said that because of the government's efforts people living in far-flung parts of the province are now receiving medical treatment closer to their homes.

Calling the government move a major step forward for the province's public health system, the chief minister said this would bring tangible improvements in the lives of ordinary citizens.

He said the government plans to expand the scope of these services to ensure every citizen of Balochistan has access to timely and the best medical treatment.—Staff Correspondent

Three hurt in blast, road crash

By Ali Jan Mangi

DERA MURAD JAMALI: Three people were injured in separate incidents of a gas cylinder explosion and a traffic accident in Usta Muhammad and Dera Murad Jamali on Saturday.

Police said that a gas cylinder exploded at a hotel in main Usta Muhammad town, injuring one of its employees.

Other people sitting in the hotel escaped the blast, but the building suffered damage.

Meanwhile, two people were seriously injured in an accident in Dera Murad Jamali.

They were immediately shifted to the hospital and after initial treatment, referred to Larkana for further treatment. The injured were identified as Dil Murad Rind and Shabbir Dinari.

Airports outsourcing

Continued from Page 1

transaction structure report and recommendations of the earlier financial adviser.

Additionally, the financial adviser will develop and implement an effective marketing strategy with the approval of the Privatisation Commission.

This includes developing and implementing a plan for introducing the Roosevelt's site and projecting its image to bolster its value, "enabling expression of interest in the property from prospective investors".

The adviser will also be required to arrange meetings with potential investors in order to develop a better understanding of investor profiles and the investment climate.

Located in midtown on Madison Avenue, the Roosevelt Hotel is the only real estate entity on the government's privatisation program.

The 19-storey property is considered among the elite hotels in Manhattan, comprising 1,025 rooms with a covered area of over 600,000 square feet. It is wholly owned by PIA Investments Ltd (PIAIL), which is owned and managed by the Pakistan government.

Outrage as Imaan, Hadi jailed in Peca case

Continued from Page 1

non-payment. All sentences will run concurrently.

The order noted that the convicts were present in custody in another case via video link and directed that they be kept in jail to serve their sentences. Both were granted the benefit of Section 382-B of the Code of Criminal Procedure —allowing the period of detention to be considered as part of the sentence.

The lawyer couple were already on judicial remand at Rawalpindi's Adiala jail after they were arrested in Islamabad in connection with a separate case on Friday.

Judgement

Judge Majoka referred to an August 2025 complaint by Sub-Inspector Sharooz Riaz alleging that Ms Mazari disseminated "offensive, misleading and anti-state content" on social media with Mr Chattha's "active connivance".

The order read that her posts promoted narratives "aligned with terrorist groups and proscribed organisations and individuals, incited ethnic hatred, undermined trust in state institutions" and portrayed the armed forces as responsible for terrorism and enforced disappearances".

According to the order, tweets posted between 2021 and 2025 reflected the agenda of banned outfits, including the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The judge observed that both accused, being advocates, knowingly referred to Pakistan as a "terrorist state", "which in fact is the agenda of BLA and TTP".

The court held that the accused portrayed the armed forces as being responsible for the acts of terrorism in the country and glorified banned organisations as well as individuals through tweets, retweets and shared content, including posts supporting the BLA, TTP, Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement and individuals such as Mahrang Baloch, Ali Wazir and Manzoor Pashteen. It added that five prosecution witnesses were examined, including National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) Reporting Centre Assistant Director Imran Haider and the complainant.

While referring to posts by Ms Mazari in support of Mahrang Baloch and the Baloch Yakjehti Committee, the court noted that several of these were reposted by Mr Chattha.

Rejecting the defence's argument that merely expressing views about proscribed individuals did not amount to an offence, the judge noted that Peca defined glorification as "any form of praise or celebration" of proscribed organisations or individuals.

The order further added that the accused had damaged public trust in state institutions and spread unsubstantiated claims of enforced disappearances, making them liable under Peca.

It noted that Ms Mazari had alleged the existence of state-run torture cells and claimed that repression and violence were standard responses to peaceful Baloch activism, which the court said attracted liability under Section 10 of Peca.

On the charge of spreading false information, the judge observed that the accused had provided no proof to support claims of enforced disappearances, yet repeatedly accused the state of being responsible for them in their social media posts.

Earlier on Saturday, the couple briefly appeared via video link before Majoka's court in Islamabad. However, court proceedings were disrupted when the couple boycotted the hearing, following which the court reserved its order.

The case pertaining to controversial social media posts stems from a complaint filed on Aug 12, 2025 at the NCCIA in Islamabad.

The NCCIA complaint accused Ms Mazari of disseminating and "propagating narratives that align with hostile terrorist groups and proscribed organisations", while her husband was implicated for reposting some of her posts.

The FIR of the case alleged that the two held security forces responsible for cases of missing persons in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

It also stated that they had portrayed the armed forces as ineffective against proscribed groups, including the BLA and TTP. Judge Majoka issued arrest warrants for the couple on Nov 5, 2025.

Criticism

The couple's arrest on Friday prompted criticism by rights bodies, politicians, and journalists, who stressed their right to a fair trial.

Amnesty International noted the "lack of adherence to due process" and said these were "retaliatory cases aimed solely at silencing Ms Mazari and Mr Chattha for their human rights work and dissent".

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) also condemned the arrests, terming the case a "tool to harass, intimidate and ultimately muzzle dissent".

Ms Mazari's mother Shireen Mazari, a former human rights minister, reacted to the sentencing by terming it "totally illegal".

"Their [transfer application] is still pending in [Islamabad High Court] so legally judge cannot pass judgement till [transfer application] is heard," she contended.

In another post, she said: "They got their pound of flesh [through] an order passed illegally but the emasculated men don't give a damn. It was always about 'off with their heads."

In a statement, opposition alliance Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP) also slammed the sentencing of the couple, claiming that the convictions followed an "unjust and non-independent trial", describing the sentences as "excessive, discriminatory and politically motivated".

TTAP spokesperson Akhunzada Hussain Yousafzai said the verdict "violated the fundamental principles of judicial independence and reflected a climate of fear and pressure within the judiciary".

The alliance demanded the immediate release of the couple and called for the restoration of judicial independence in accordance with the Constitution.

Senate opposition leader Allama Raja Nasir Abbas called the verdict "a grave miscarriage of justice".

"These human rights lawyers were convicted under Peca solely for social media posts criticising what they saw as state abuses and advocating for marginalised communities," he said.

PTI leader Omar Ayub Khan noted that the "kangaroo court" conviction of the couple proved that "the legal system in Pakistan is dead".

"Members of the judiciary, from the highest to the lowest forum should hang their heads in shame," he said.

"The judiciary is a willing accessory and accomplice with the illegally imposed fascist regime ruling Pakistan," he added.

Verdict defended

Meanwhile, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar hailed the verdict, quipping on X: "As you sow, so shall you reap!" He added: "The first official and final result of Peca. One should fear God,".

Speaking to *Geo News*, Rana Sanaullah, the prime minister's adviser on political affairs, rejected claims that the trial was unfair, saying the accused were given multiple opportunities for cross-examination but repeatedly "insulted the court".

He said he respected Ms Mazari as a lawyer and viewed her as a daughter or younger sister, but criticised what he described as attacks on the armed forces and those who "sacrifice their lives for the country".

"No one should be allowed to go to such lengths," he said.

Mr Sanaullah added that Ms Mazari was free to criticise the government, constitutional amendments and alleged attempts to curb judicial independence.

However, he said such criticism should be tempered by the prevailing security situation, and maintained that allegations of an unfair trial were "not facts", claiming he had personally enquired about the rights given to the couple during the proceedings.

Ikram Junaidi in Islamabad also contributed to this report

Three die in Lahore hotel blaze

Continued from Page 1

area, some of whom had sustained burn injuries. One of the injured, identified as 46-year-old Mubeen, was shifted to Services Hospital for treatment, while another victim reportedly suffered 30 to 40 per cent burns.

Deputy Commissioner Lahore, retired Capt Ali Ejaz, reached the site and was briefed by the Model Town assistant commissioner, Rescue 1122, Fire Brigade, and Civil Defence officials. He directed the authorities to ensure immediate evacuation of all individuals from the building and to provide first aid before shifting the injured to Services or Jinnah Hospital.

Rescue 1122 stated that the hotel building comprises 19 storeys with three basements and is spread over four kanals. Basement one was the most affected, with heavy smoke posing serious challenges for firefighters and rescuers. Initial findings suggested that the fire may have been caused by a gas leak in the basement.

Officials confirmed that around 275 staff members and guests were safely evacuated from the hotel.

Police said crew members of several foreign airlines were also staying at the hotel at the time of the incident.

RESCUE workers extinguish a blaze, which claimed three lives, at a hotel in Gulberg.—White Star

During the initial phase of the operation, two people who died from burn injuries were identified as 25-year-old Imran and 30-year-old Shehryar, according to an Edhi Foundation spokesperson.

Edhi volunteers shifted their bodies to the morgue in ambulances and continued assisting in relief efforts at the site.

In a later update, Rescue 1122 said that during a secondary search operation, another body was recovered from the building. The deceased was identified as 30-year-old Riaz, whose body was shifted to Services Hospital.

Response hailed

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz commended the emergency response, saying timely action by Rescue 1122 helped prevent further loss of life.

She said senior provincial officials were immediately directed to reach the site and supervise the rescue and firefighting operation.

The chief minister also shared several updates about the incident on social media platform X. She said the fire had occurred in the basement of the hotel and that 280 people, including 180 guests and 100 staff members, were rescued.

She added that she monitored the evacuation and rescue operation through the Safe City drone system.

The chief minister said the incident was caused by the "explosion of the air-conditioning system boiler", terming it "severe".

"Strict directives have been issued: all commercial boiler and cylinder installations across Punjab must fully comply with safety standards. Any premises found compromising public safety will be sealed immediately, without exception," she said.

Authorities said a detailed investigation had been launched to determine the exact cause of the fire, while cooling and safety inspection work at the building continued.

On Thursday, the Punjab government gave stakeholders two weeks to implement standard operating procedures (SOPs) in plazas, schools and hospitals in the wake of Gul Plaza inferno.

"A building grading system has now been introduced across the province, under which safe buildings will be categorised as A-grade, while others will be graded according to their condition.The firefighting sector is being upgraded with modern technology, drones and state-of-the-art equipment," Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari said at a press conference in Lahore.

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TENDER NOTICE FOR NICVD KARACHI

Tender No. 32/2025 (Re-Tender) & 14-2025

Online Tenders through EPAD SPPRA addressed to Executive Director, NICVD, Karachi are invited under SPPRA rules, 2010 (Amended 2019) from well reputed Manufacturers, Authorized Distributors, Sole Agents, Contractors, Consultants, must be registered with Sales Tax Department on FOR basis for the following supply items for the financial year **2025-2026-2027**.

S. No.	Description	Tender Nos.	Quantity & Specifications are available in Tender Documents	Last Date & Time of Submission & purchasing of Bids	Opening Date & Time of Technical Bids
01.	Invitation of Bids HVAC/ Electrical & Civil Works (as per Scope of Work & List) at NICVD Karachi.	**32-2025 (Re-Tender)**		11-02-2026 Wednesday at 10:30 a.m.	11-02-2026 Wednesday at 11:00 a.m.
02.	Annual Tender for Supply of Linen/ Uniform items (As per list).	**14-2025**		11-02-2026 Wednesday at 10:30 a.m.	11-02-2026 Wednesday at 11:00 a.m.

Bidding documents should be downloaded from EPADs (SPPRA) & should submit pay order/cash of **Rs. 3000/-** for each tender in the name of Executive Director, NICVD, Karachi for each tender from **26-01-2026 (Monday).**

Bids should be submitted in EPAD SPPRA Software before above submission details. Bids will be opened online on the above mentioned date and time in the presence of Tender Opening Committee and bidders at **11:00 a.m., sharp.**

All tenders will be accepted along with a **pay order / bank draft of 2%** of the total bid amount in the name of Executive Director, NICVD, Karachi, as bid security, to be submitted to the Procurement Department before the bid opening.

Note: Single Stage One envelope procedure will be followed.

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1.Evaluation criteria would be strictly followed.
2.This advertisement is also available on EPADS & NICVD websites.

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